

A Christmas Truce

Newport, Minn., Aug. 16, 1916.—
Mr. W. J. Bryan, Lincoln, Neb. Dear Mr. Bryan: In answer to your request made on the train en route from Kansas City the other day I am sending you a copy of the Christmas truce article which was printed by the United Press Association, through its clients, on March 24, 1915. I wrote this article from information given to me by Phil Rader, a member of the foreign legion but, as I have only the one clipping, I am rewriting it. It follows:

"London, March 1.—There were five Americans in that marvelous Christmas truce in my part of the trenches, Eugene Jacobs, Pawtucket, R. I., Victor Chapman, a Harvard man from New York, myself, and two others who are mentioned later. For twenty consecutive days before Christmas dawned we had faced that strip of land, 95 feet wide, between our trench and that of the Germans—that terrible No-Man's Land, dotted with dead bodies, crisscrossed by tangled mazes of barbed wire. The little strip was as wide and deep and as full of death as the Atlantic ocean, as uncrossable as the spaces between the stars, as terrible as human hate. The sunshine of that French Christmas morning fell upon it as brightly as if it were a lovers' lane or the aisle of some cathedral.

"I don't know how the truce began in the other trenches but in our hole Nadem began it—Nadem, a Turk, who believes that Mahomet and not Christ was the prophet of God. He was only an enthusiastic boy, always childishly happy, and when we noticed at the regular morning shooting hour that the German trenches were silent Nadem began to make a joke of it.

"He drew a target on a board, fastened it to a pole and stuck it above the trench, shouting to the Germans, 'See how well you can shoot.' Within a minute the target had been bull's eyed. Nadem pulled down the target, put bits of white paper on the bullet spots and put it up again so the Germans could see their score. In doing this Nadem's head appeared above the trench and we heard him talking across No Man's land. Thoughtlessly, I raised my head, too. Other men did the same. We saw hundreds of German heads appearing out of the mud like flowers springing from the earth. Smiles came over the faces, as if these strange flowers had come into sudden bloom. Shouts filled the air. What miracle had happened? Men laughed and cheered. There was Christmas light in our eyes and I know there were tears in mine. There were smiles where for many days there had been only rifle barrels. The terror of No-Man's land fell away. The sound of happy voices filled the Christmas air. We were all unhumanly happy for that one glorious instant.

"I think Nadem was the first to sense what had happened. He suddenly jumped out of the trench and began waving his hands and cheering. While he was doing this a ponderous German with a happy smile climbed out of the trench across the way and shouted, 'Lieutenant Schroeder presents his compliments to your lieutenant and desires to know if he will select four men to come to the middle of the neutral territory to arrange for a truce for burying the dead.'

"Our lieutenant agreed. I was one of the four men he selected. I shall never forget how I felt as we advanced to meet the four German soldiers and their lieutenant who were coming to meet us. We felt as

if we wanted to throw our arms about these men. They told us afterward that the same desire was upon them.

"The horrors of war had been withdrawn. You felt their handshakes—double handshakes, with both hands—in your heart. The truce was arranged. There was to be no more firing for one hour and the men from both sides were to come out and bury the dead bodies which had been lying in No-Man's land for many weeks. The soldiers flocked from their trenches. They rushed to each other and shook hands.

"I want to have your photographs,' said the German lieutenant to our party. He sent back for his camera and we enemies stood with our arms about each other's shoulders in horseshoe formation while the lieutenant snapped his camera.

"If I don't have a chance to send you the pictures before the war is over, I shall see that you get them afterwards,' he said, and he took our home addresses.

"At last the bodies were buried. The hour of truce had passed. But the men did not go back to the trenches. In groups about that once terrible strip of No-Man's Land the Germans and the men of the French foreign legion sat talking or playing cards, exchanging tobacco and cigarettes, joking and laughing.

"Don't blame us,' was the burden of the Germans' talk. 'It is not our fault that we are fighting. We don't know what it's all about. We have wives and children and we are just the same kind of men that you are. We're d—fools and so is everybody else who is fighting.'

"And our talk was about the same. It was not until the sun began to go down that we returned to the trenches.

"We are to have a band in our trenches tonight and we want you to hear it,' said the Germans as they bade us goodbye, and we shook the hands that might slay us on the morrow. At night there was a sudden blast of music that thrilled us. A little German band had crept into the German trenches and announced itself with a grand chord. Then came the unexpected strains of the 'Marseillaise.' The Frenchmen were almost frantic with delight. Then came our turn, when the band played, 'It's a Long, Long, Way to Tipperary.' George Ullard, our negro cook, who came from Galveston, got out his mouth organ and almost bursted his lungs playing 'Die Wacht am Rhein.' The yell in the German trenches was a thousand times more eloquent than the cheers we gave when George concluded. There was no more shooting through the night, until six in the morning when the sound of rifle shots came from far down the trenches. Nadem had been the first to feel the holiday spirit of Christmas but, on the day after Christmas, he failed to sense the grimness of war that had fallen over the trenches during the night. Early in the morning he jumped out of the trenches and began waving his hands again. John Street, an American, who had been an evangelist in St. Louis, jumped out with him and began to shout a morning greeting to the friends he had made the day before. There was a sudden rattle of rifle fire and Street fell dead with a bullet through his head. Nadem rolled back again into the trench.

"The sun was shining down again on a world gone mad."

The article is copyrighted by the United Press Association, but the incident, of course, you may use, if you see fit. Hoping that it will be of help to you in your great mission I am

Yours very truly,
W. G. SHEPHERD,
New Port, Minnesota.

FOR RELIGIOUS PEACE

A new peace movement has been launched in this city. It has rather better prospects of success than the peace movement in Europe and is quite as important in its way. A number of prominent Protestants and Catholics, clergymen and laymen, have been getting together of late for the purpose of stopping, locally at least, the sectarian warfare which broke out in this country two or three years ago after being dormant for almost a generation.

These men have issued an address to the public, which is an eloquent plea for a better understanding between the sects and the cessation of hostilities which, whatever their other effect, certainly give aid and comfort to the enemies of all religion. The list of names attached to this document is an impressive argument in itself.

We think that Buffalo is the first city in which such a movement has been made. The general policy of men of the class that signed this paper has been to ignore the sectarian controversy as much as possible. But such crusades can not be checked by ignoring them. They thrive on such treatment. It is better to provide an open court for the discussions of the disputants, as The Express has been doing through its Morning's Mail and news columns. Then neither side can raise the cry of "persecution," while both sides can relieve their feelings, with some chance of securing, through publicity, the redress of some of the things of which they complain. For probably no signer of the statement we publish this morning would deny that there have been and are faults and unfairness on both sides of the controversy.—Buffalo Express.

TWELVE THINGS TO REMEMBER

- 1 The value of time.
- 2 The success of perseverance.
- 3 The pleasure of working.
- 4 The dignity of simplicity.
- 5 The worth of Character.
- 6 The power of kindness.
- 7 The influence of example.
- 8 The obligation of duty.
- 9 The wisdom of economy.
- 10 The virtue of patience.
- 11 The improvement of talent.
- 12 The joy of originating.

—Marshall Field.

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